ECLIPSE COMICS

DON McGREGOR · MARSHALL ROGERS

Detectives Inc.™

No. 1

$1.75

$2.25 in Canada

FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

The PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

ON THE RACKS

DNAGENTS no. 21
The mercenary group from DNAGENTS no. 1 is back — with Tank as their newest member! "Mind Set" is by Evanier, Schauer and Blyberg.

AZTEC ACE no. 12
"Bloody Pulp" takes Bridget back to San Francisco 1940 one more time, as she and Ace become involved in gang warfare and a disease of the blood..

MASKED MAN no. 3
The Architectural Terrorists are back, along with Aphid-Man, in a B.C. Boyer extravaganza called "There Are No Heroes." Plus "Security Man."

STRANGE DAYS no. 3
Paradax versus V.2 Pinhead! Johnny Nemo versus the Sirians! The Drifter versus Death! The mini-series concludes! Milligan, Ewins & MCarthy forever!

CROSSFIRE no. 10
"Cadaver Goes to Hollywood" in this off-beat tale by Mark Evanier and Dan Spiegle — as Crossfire hunts the man from a previous century.

SABRE no. 13
"The Decadence Indoctrination" by Don McGregor & Jose Ortiz continues, as danger lurks on the beach and intrigue brews in Roanoke!

DETECTIVES INC 2
Just two weeks after issue 1 goes on sale, you'll be able to read the stunning conclusion to this Don McGregor-Marshall Rogers action-adventure!

Have you ever wondered how a newcomer to comics — a production assistant, for example — can rise up through the ranks to the semi-exalted position of Assistant Editor quicker than you can say, "Piece o' cake"?

Well, here's a little story, a moral lesson worthy of Horation Alger, about the day that Sean Deming, Brand-New Production Assistant, proved himself worthy of promotion to the rank of Assistant Editor and All-Around Hero of the Office.

We've been here in our California office almost two years now. The first week we were here, we bought a new photocopy machine. The only trouble was, there was just one three-prong outlet, and people were always tripping over it. That was okay, but when we bought a computer, we had to rig another extension cable to the three-prong outlet.

Now if you ever worked with a computer, you know what happens when somebody trips over the cord and accidentally unplugs you: instant memory wipe-out of everything not stored on the diskette. To avoid accidental disconnection of the computer, we gave it a bright orange cable . . . and we crossed our fingers a lot.

Okay, so here comes Sean, new kid in the office. We show him where the X-acto knives go, and how to put paper in the copier, and all the other diddly little things that make office life so wonderful. And after a couple of days i ask him if he has ever had experience with word-processing, and can he use a computer? "No sweat," he says. (His exact words, i remember them well.) So i give him the big lecture about the orange extension cable and the three-prong outlet, which is way the heck on the other side of a wall, around a corner and behind a Coke machine. He listens and says, "No sweat." (His exact words.)

So i go away and leave him to his fate. He won't find the outlet, or he'll trip over the extension cable and wipe out a dozen paragraphs. I know he will, on account of guys who say, "No sweat" like that are cruisin' for a bruisin'.

But half an hour goes by, and all I hear is the tickety tick of the keyboard and the wrr-chkk of the disk drive, and nothing's going wrong. I can't believe it. Nobody has tripped over the extension cable. How come?

When i go over for a closer look, i see a sight i am totally unprepared for. Sean has plugged the cord into a three-prong outlet right NEXT to the computer! No horrible orange extension cable through the door, around the corner and behind the Coke machine!

I've never seen that three-prong outlet before in my life!

"Oh, says Sean, looking up most casually as Dean and i stutter and sputter over this miracle, "I thought it'd be better to plug it in over here. It's closer."

B-b-but where did that new three-prong outlet materialize from?

"Piece o' cake," says Sean. "It was right here all along. You guys just must have overlooked it somehow."

And that, folks, is why i predict that Sean Deming is a name you'll be seeing more of soon. (Hint: check out ALIEN ENCOUNTERS no. 1, shipping in June.)

catherine yronwode

IN YOUR HANDS

For my wife, Marsha . . .
Who taught me life could be a celebration and reconfirmed that romance is more than just a word . . .
. . . for her touch in November . . .
. . . for warmer, brighter nights and the promise of enchanting days . . .
. . . and for her courage through the frightening economic horrors until this book reached its audience.
This one's for her.

Love,
Don

DETECTIVES INC. No. 1, April 1985. Published by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446. Catherine Yronwode, Editor-in-Chief. Dean Mullaney, Editor and Publisher. Detectives, Inc. TM and © 1980, 1985 Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers. Text © 1985 Don McGregor. All other material © 1985 Eclipse Comics. The stories, characters, events and places in this magazine are entirely fictional. Printed in Canada.

The South Bronx lies expectantly under the oppressive October night.
Ted Denning and Bob Rainier park on one of the desolate side streets. The faraway sound of traffic on the Bruckner Expressway beckons them to take the escape route out of Fort Apache. Better make tracks, gentlemen.
PROLOGUE:
The area is like an alien country of condemned buildings, some burned out, some left like crushed brick ash after a holocaust, some with families who have watched their neighborhood succumb, who have mourned as these buildings died, and who know winter approaches.
Manhattan seems a lifetime away.
The gutters run a desperate current of McDonald's hamburger wrappers, rusted beer cans, dog shit, hope, despair, love, hate, ignorance and wasted intelligence, and with the memories of blood.
DAMN! I HATE CARRYING THIS GUN.
MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A LEPER IN THE MIDDLE OF SAKS FIFTH AVENUE.

CREATED and WRITTEN by DON McGREGOR • ILLUSTRATED by MARSHALL ROGERS • LETTERED by ORZECHOWSKI • COLORED by TIM SMITH

HELLUVA DETECTIVE YOU ARE, WYATT.

WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT YOU'RE RIGHT, ARISTOTLE.

DETECTIVES INC.

THING IS, I'M AFRAID I'LL SHOOT MYSELF WHERE IT HURTS MOST.

LET ME GUESS, IN YOUR FOOT?

NO, NOT MY FOOT, GENIUS.

THAT MAY BE WHERE IT'D HURT *YOU* THE MOST, SINCE YOU'VE BECOME A WORLD-RENOWNED CELIBATE.

YOU KNOW, MAN--

YOU'D THINK I'D GET USED TO THIS PIECE.

I'VE FIRED IT IN ENOUGH TEST RANGES--

-- AND I LOGGED ENOUGH HOURS WITH WEAPONS WHEN WE WERE IN THE ARMY THAT I SHOULD BE AS USED TO IT AS DRIVING A CAR.

BUT ITS WEIGHT ALWAYS SCARES ME.

I DON'T GET MY ROCKS OFF FIRING IT. AND I NEVER FORGET HOW REAL IT IS--

--NEVER LULLED INTO TV'S BLOOD-LESS REALITY OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER.

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? ARE YOU EATING ALL THE *ORANGE* NECCO WAFERS?

I LIKE 'EM. I DON'T LIKE THE PURPLE OR WHITE ONES.

HELL, MAN! NOBODY DOES.

I'LL BET THERE'S A GUY WHO GOES AROUND PUTTING PURPLE AND WHITE WAFERS INTO EVERY PACK!

IT'S A PLOT!

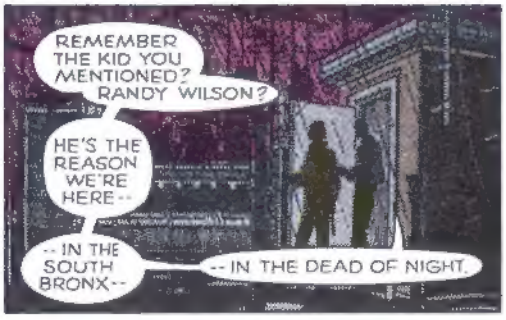
TELL ME, HOLMES, DO YOU THINK THE KID WILL SHOW?

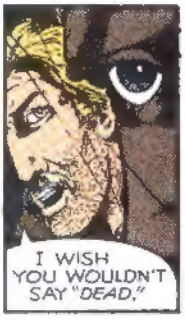
THE BIZARRENESS OF YOUR "CAPTAIN QUEEG-ESQUE" MIND.

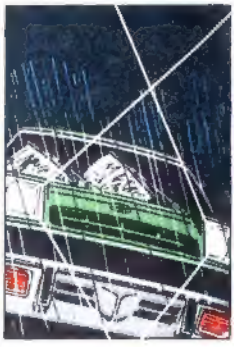
I DON'T KNOW. I HOPE SO. FOR HIS FATHER'S SAKE, I HOPE HE'LL LISTEN.

WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING IN THE SOUTH BRONX, AFTER THE LIGHTS HAVE ALL GONE DOWN LOW?
IT CAN BE DANGEROUS ENOUGH IN THE SUNLIGHT, TED.
Uh-huh. PARANOIA IS VERY BECOMING ON YOU, TOO.

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT YOUR MEMORY'S GONE BAD ON YOU. WE'RE OUT HERE BECAUSE OF A BROKEN MAN WHO'S LOST ALL OF HIS ILLUSIONS--
--BUT DOESN'T WANT TO LOSE HIS SON.


REMEMBER THE KID YOU MENTIONED? RANDY WILSON?
HE'S THE REASON WE'RE HERE--
--IN THE SOUTH BRONX--
--IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.


I WISH YOU WOULDN'T SAY "DEAD."

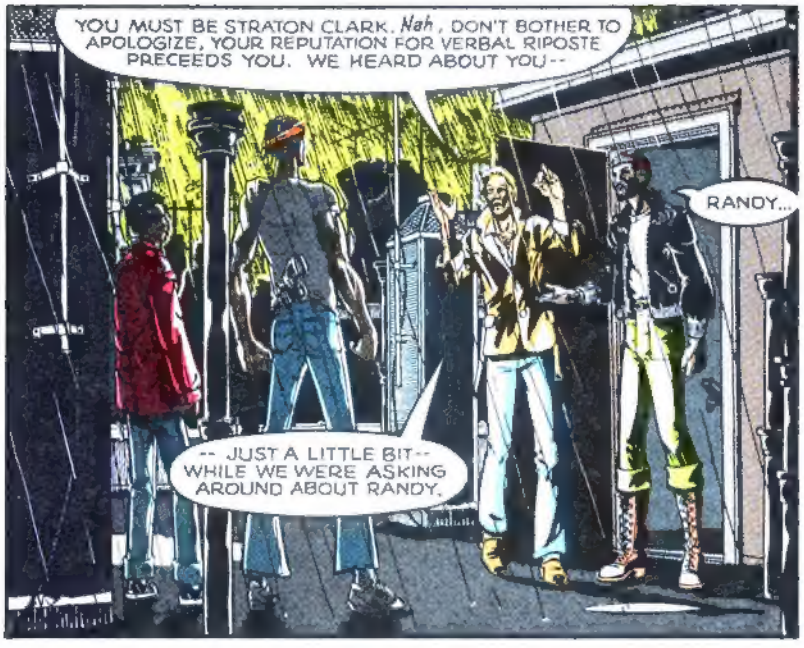


YOU BEEN LOOKIN' FOR ME, OR WHAT?

WE WERE KINDA UNDER THE IMPRESSION FROM YOUR PHONE CALL THAT YOU WERE GOING TO BE ALONE WHEN WE MET YOU.
YEAH, WITHOUT THE "CLOCKWORK ORANGE" DROOGS.

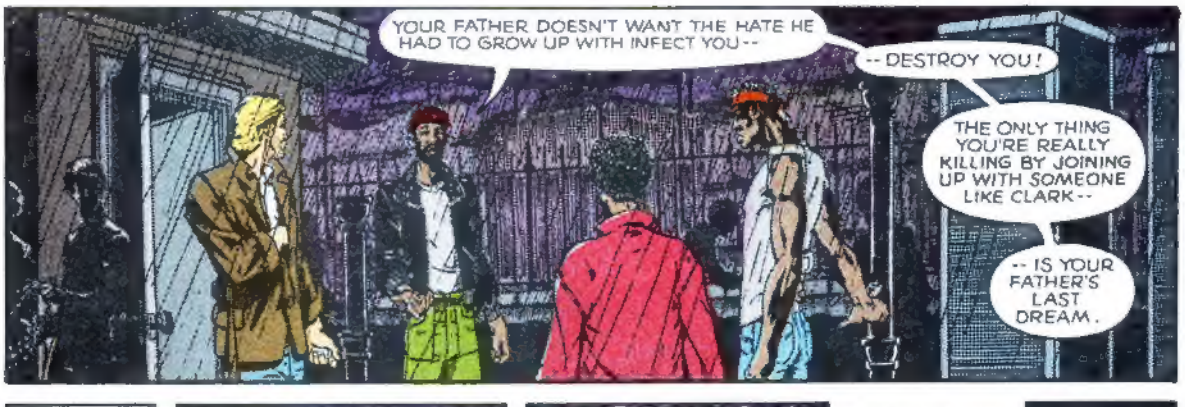
SEE, RANDY, THESE GUYS ARE S'POSED TO BE COOL, UNDERSTAND, BLOOD?
WHAT YOU GUYS REALLY ARE--

--IS SHIT-HEADS!

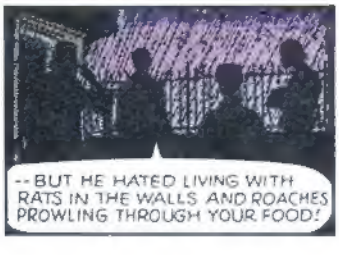

YOU MUST BE STRATON CLARK. Nah, DON'T BOTHER TO APOLOGIZE, YOUR REPUTATION FOR VERBAL RIPOSTE PRECEEDS YOU. WE HEARD ABOUT YOU--
RANDY...
-- JUST A LITTLE BIT-- WHILE WE WERE ASKING AROUND ABOUT RANDY.

...YOUR FATHER'S AFRAID YOU'RE GOING TO GET YOUR HEAD HANDED TO YOU, EITHER BY THESE GUYS, OR BY THE COPS-- IF YOU'RE A PART OF THESE TENEMENT TORCHINGS.
EITHER WAY, YOU LOSE--
-- FOR KEEPS!
WHA'CHU SAYIN', MAN?
YOU ACCUSIN' US OF SOMETHIN'?

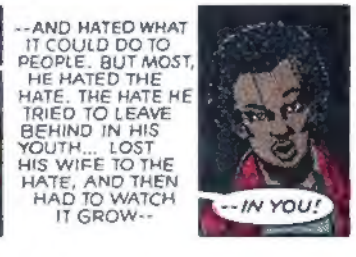
SKREEEEEEE


YOUR FATHER DOESN'T WANT THE HATE HE HAD TO GROW UP WITH INFECT YOU--
-- DESTROY YOU!
THE ONLY THING YOU'RE REALLY KILLING BY JOINING UP WITH SOMEONE LIKE CLARK--
-- IS YOUR FATHER'S LAST DREAM.

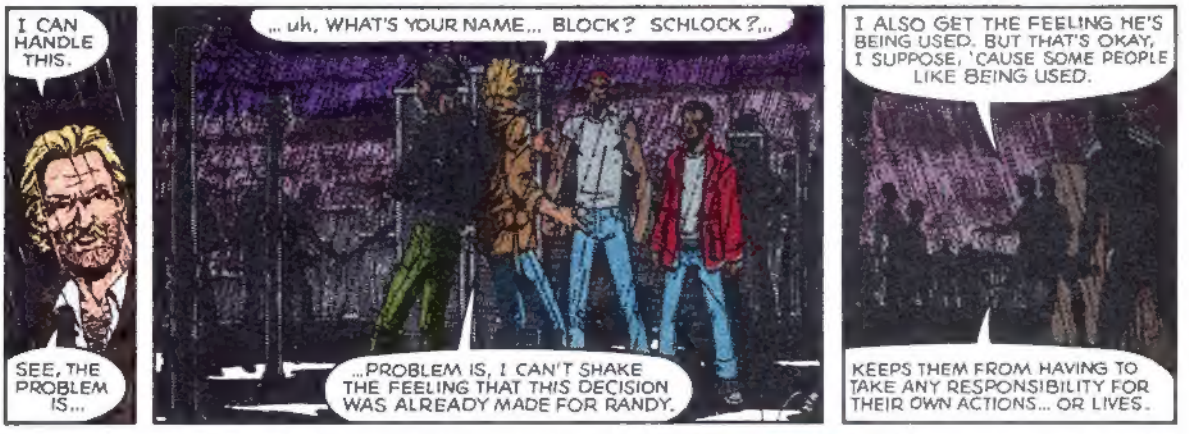
YOUR FATHER LOVED THIS CITY--


-- BUT HE HATED LIVING WITH RATS IN THE WALLS AND ROACHES PROWLING THROUGH YOUR FOOD!

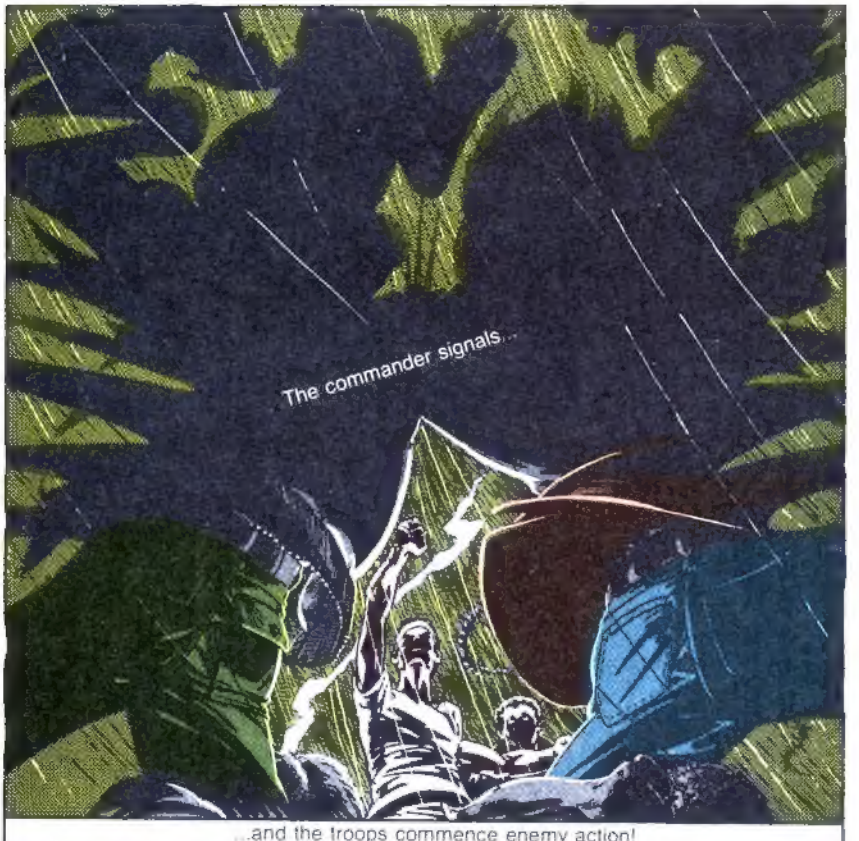
HE LOVED WHAT THIS CITY COULD BE --


--AND HATED WHAT IT COULD DO TO PEOPLE. BUT MOST, HE HATED THE HATE. THE HATE HE TRIED TO LEAVE BEHIND IN HIS YOUTH... LOST HIS WIFE TO THE HATE, AND THEN HAD TO WATCH IT GROW--
--IN YOU!

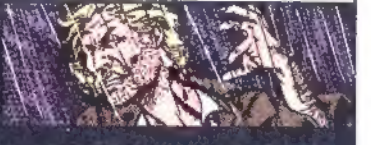
YOUR FATHER WANTED YOU TO SEE WIDER SWEEPS OF SKY.
GIVE HIM...
...THE CHANCE...
...GIVE YOURSELF...
...THE CHANCE!
WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE, MAN. WE JUST WANT TO TAKE YOU HOME.
WELL, RANDY, WHA'CHU SAY TA THESE SUCKERS?
Huh, BLOOD?
SCREW, SHIT-HEAD.
YOU HEARD 'IM. M'MAN DON'T WANNA GO WITH YOU.
LET ME HANDLE THIS.


I CAN HANDLE THIS.
SEE, THE PROBLEM IS...
... uh, WHAT'S YOUR NAME... BLOCK? SCHLOCK?...
...PROBLEM IS, I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT THIS DECISION WAS ALREADY MADE FOR RANDY.
I ALSO GET THE FEELING HE'S BEING USED. BUT THAT'S OKAY, I SUPPOSE, 'CAUSE SOME PEOPLE LIKE BEING USED.
KEEPS THEM FROM HAVING TO TAKE ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS... OR LIVES.

THE TROUBLE WITH DUMB SONUVABITCHES LIKE YOU, CLARK-- IS THAT YOU ALWAYS END UP KILLING PEOPLE--
--WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR GODDAMNED MYOPIC DELUSIONS. THAT MEANS NEAR-SIGHTED, CLARK.
WE *DOIN'* SOMETHING, SHIT-HEAD! WE AIN'T TALKIN' NO GAME.
WE BEEN GETTIN' SCREWED GOOD.
MY MEN, THEY KNOW 'BOUT FUCKIN' PROMISES FROM ASSHOLE POLITICIANS, AND KNOW 'BOUT EMPTY BELLIES, TOO.
YOU FEELIN' THE WEIGHT, BROTHER?
YOU'RE NOT MY BROTHER, "SHIT-HEAD."
NOW BACK OFF, CUT US SOME SLACK, AND NO ONE HAS TO GET HURT.



...and the troops commence enemy action!



The steel barb tears Rainier's neck flesh, rends it open. Rain and blood wash down his throat!

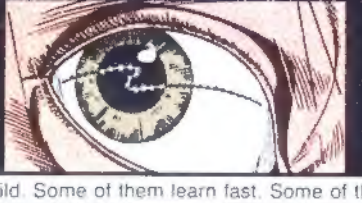
Jesus! The whip wielder is only a kid. Maybe ten. Twelve, at the outside.

Rainier knows, immediately: This is not the first time this child has calculatedly gouged human flesh with barbed wire!

The flexible whip

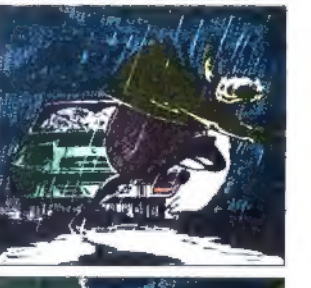
slices through the rain—

—and Rainier knows the child has aimed it for his eyes—



— knows the sharp silver will rip pupil and iris with ease!

Only a child. Some of them learn fast. Some of them have to!



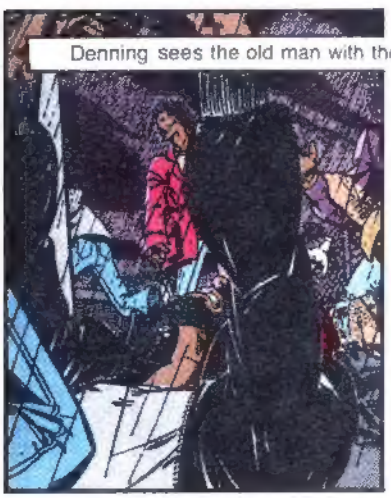
Rainier twists his body, and feels the backs of his hands scrape open on the tar.

Damn!

The fibula snaps!

It is young bone that has never carried its master farther than Coney Island, and now it tears through flesh and trouser—

— and Rainier wishes he and Denning were back in their office on the West Side of mid-Manhattan, wishes he did not hear the sound of breaking bone, wishes he did not know twelve year-old killers could exist.

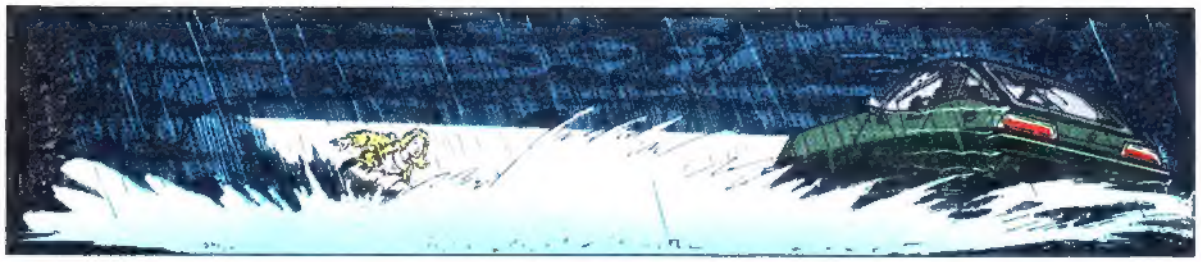


Denning sees the old man with the torn eyes again.

He is always seeing the old man, Randy Wilson's father.

Always hearing the old man plead with them to please bring his son back.

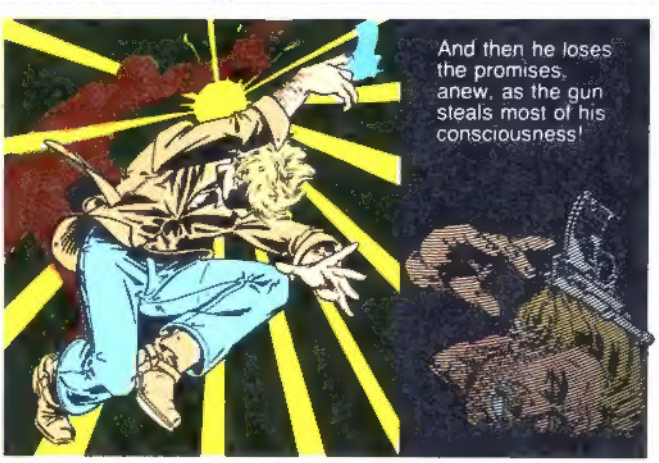
He will beg if they want, because his son's life is more important than his dignity.



Rainier remembers the two year-old promise of Detectives, Inc.

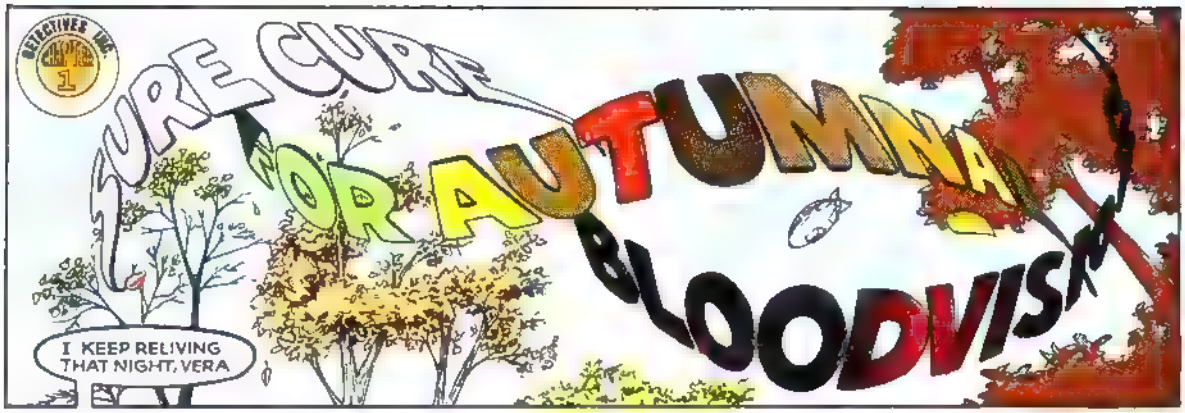
He remembers the promise of Rita.

The promises pulse like the barbed-wire wound in his neck.


And then he loses the promises, anew, as the gun steals most of his consciousness!

CLARK!
PUT IT UP, CLARK!
I KNOW THE WORD DOESN'T MEAN MUCH TO YOU, BUT--
--PLEASE--
--PUT UP THE GUN!
YOU AIN'T GONNA GUN DOWN ON ME FOR NO WHITE MUTHAFUCKA!
CLCK
LET HIM GO, CLARK! PLEASE, LET HIM GO!
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO K LL YOU!
SHEE-IT, MAN MY LUCK I GOTTA RUN INTO A FUCKIN' OREO-COOKIE, WID YOUR "PLEASE" AND ALL THAT GOOD SHIT!
TURN 'ROUND, NIGGER, AND HAUL YOUR DUMB ASS SELF OUTTA HERE, FORE YOU GETCHA SELF DAID
LESS'N YOU WANNA SEE HIM GET HIS BRAINS ALL OVER YOUR PRETTY CLOTHES
LAST TIME, CLARK TAKE YOUR FINGER-
OKAY DUMB ASS, THIS IS WHERE HE
- OFF THAT TRIGGER!
CLCK
RAK

RAK
STRAT! HEY STRAT!
C'MON GET UP MAN!
I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN PULLING THAT TRIGGER, BOB.
YEAH, BUT YOU SEE TED, THE TROUBLE IS-
--HE DID
A REMEMBRANCE OF
THREATENING GREEN



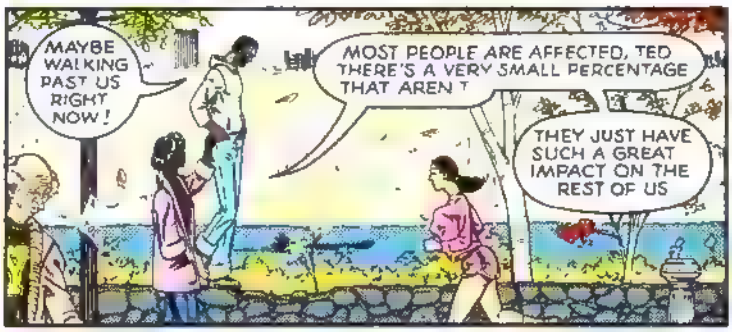
Blood visions drift alongside the fal leaves' descent

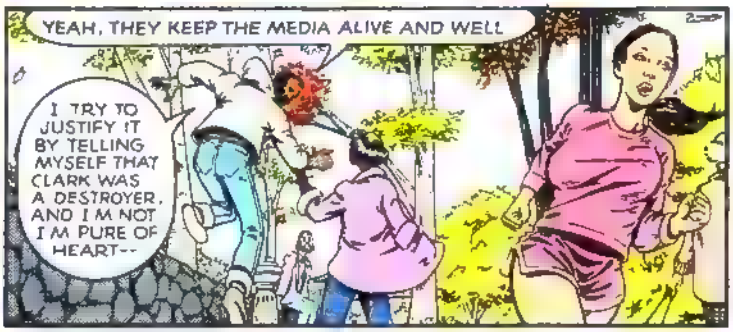
Ted Denning fee s Vera Lawrence s warmth through her b ouse and the warmth s almost enough to banish the blood visions that blur the reality of the Hudson River and Riverside Park

He sees death in the fal ng leaves but it is not some k nd of symbolic death of mank nd nor s t an awareness of h s life passing unfulf led that ntrudes on the autumn sunset, it s a spec fic death, Straton Clark s death, bone-white and blood-red and human-real that he sees

Vera Lawrence l stens and hears the long hours of condemnation that Denning does not mention It s six o clock in the evening She s weary from her day in the garment d strict on the Lower West Side of Manhattan as a secretary (or Administrative Ass stant, if you f nd the term secretary abhorrent, but stil a rose by any other name) Yet she listens to his pain, and recalls the days and nights when he has listened to hers

I KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CAN KILL, OR MAIM, AND HAVE IT MEAN NOTHING TO THEM--
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW IN HELL TO COPE WITH THE FACT THAT THOSE PEOPLE EXIST, RIGHT HERE!


MAYBE WALKING PAST US RIGHT NOW!
MOST PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED, TED THERE'S A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE THAT AREN'T
THEY JUST HAVE SUCH A GREAT IMPACT ON THE REST OF US


YEAH, THEY KEEP THE MEDIA ALIVE AND WELL
I TRY TO JUSTIFY IT BY TELLING MYSELF THAT CLARK WAS A DESTROYER, AND I'M NOT I'M PURE OF HEART--

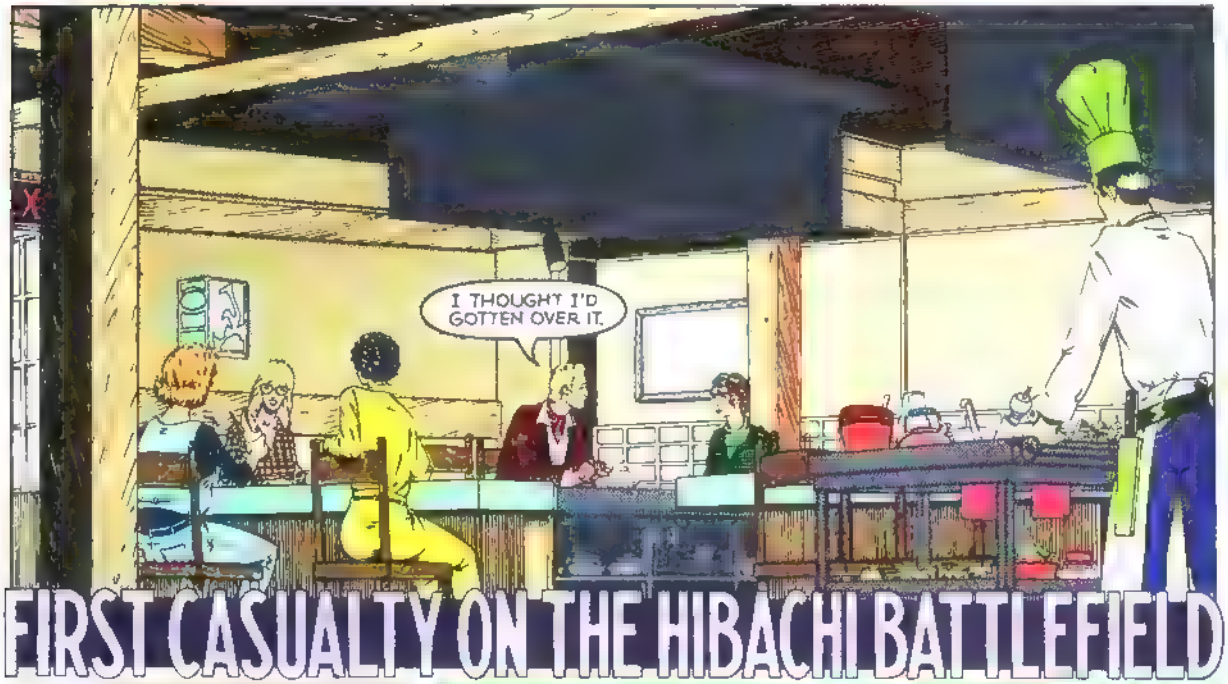
--AND THEN I WONDER HOW I CAN BE SO GODDAMNED SELF-RIGHTEOUS, BECAUSE I'M *NOT* PURE OF HEART--
--AND MAYBE I'VE BEEN A DESTROYER ALL ALONG

NO, YOU'RE NOT!
I NEVER MET THIS MAN YOU HAD TO KILL, BUT I'VE READ ABOUT HIS PAST, AND I KNOW HIS KIND!
HE HAD A LIFETIME OF USING AND HURTING, AND MAYBE HE HAD ALL KINDS OF REASONS IN THE WORLD FOR BEING THAT WAY--
--BUT HE WOULDN'T'VE FELT THE GUILT YOU FEEL IF HE HAD KILLED BOB OR YOURSELF! AND IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR BEING PURE OF HEART
YOU SHOT HIM--
--AND WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT
NOT YOU!
WE!
YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM BECAUSE YOU'RE DESTRUCTIVE
YOU DID IT TO SAVE A FRIEND--
A MAN YOU LOVE!
LOVE?
EMBARRASSED?
YES
C'MERE I WANT TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME SOME-ONE'LL SEE?

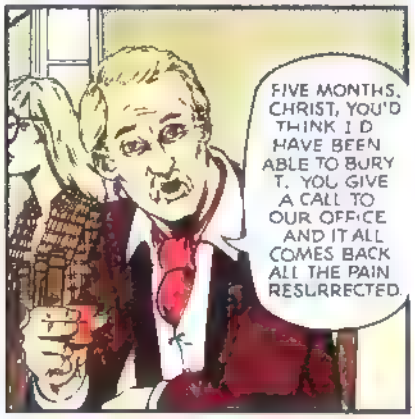
Bob Rainier looks into the lovely violet eyes and tries to find some trace of the Rita Collingsworth he had been married to for three and a half years.

Even when she had informed him, five months back, that all those years together, courtship and marriage were nothing more than a "few good times" he had still loved her eyes.

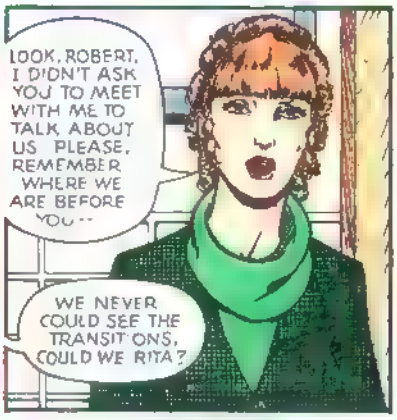
They talk across the expanse of Hibachi steak and Japanese vegetable battleground. Restaurant chatter. Who the hell needs it? He wants to ask her where the person is that he had known, known as well as he knew himself, until she had left. It was then he discovered that not only did he not know her but that, alone, he did not know himself, either.



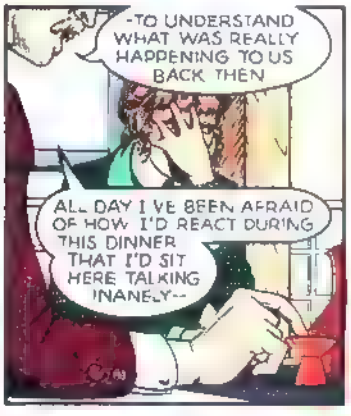
FIRST CASUALTY ON THE HIBACHI BATTLEFIELD


FIVE MONTHS, CHRIST, YOU'D THINK I'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BURY IT. YOU GIVE A CALL TO OUR OFFICE AND IT ALL COMES BACK ALL THE PAIN RESURRECTED.

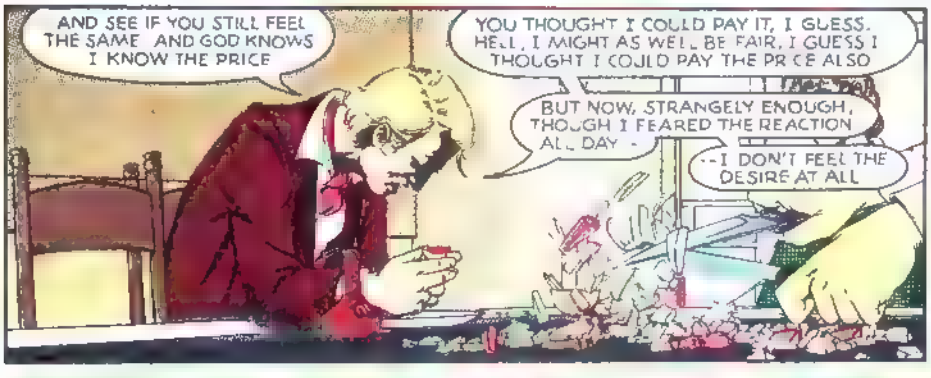
I'M LEAVING!
I'VE MADE THE DECISION! I'M GOING TO FIND ME! I'VE A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS, NOW!
FINE, HONEY FIND YOU
BUT WHY CAN'T YOU DO IT WITH US?


LOOK, ROBERT, I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO MEET WITH ME TO TALK ABOUT US. PLEASE, REMEMBER WHERE WE ARE BEFORE YOU--
WE NEVER COULD SEE THE TRANSITIONS, COULD WE RITA?

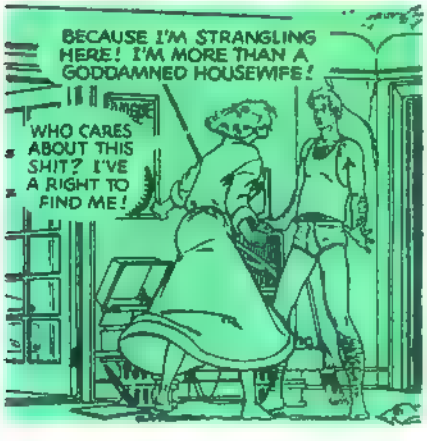
ONCE, ONE SUMMER DAY LAST YEAR, I SAW IT, BUT THAT WAS BACK WHEN WE WERE STILL US.
REMEMBER US? WE WEREN'T PART OF ANY DAMN SOCIAL STATISTICS, WE WERE BEYOND THE CLIMATES OF OUR TIMES
THE PRESSURES OF THE WORLD, THE CONFLICTS OF OTHER COUPLES? HELL, IT COULDN'T TOUCH US
GOD, WERE WE ARROGANT
THIS IS DIFFICULT FOR ME, TOO, ROBERT, BUT THIS ISN'T THE TIME OR TH--
EVEN NOW, WITH ALL THE BITTER AND WOUNDING DAYS BEHIND US
--I LOOK AT YOU, RITA, AND TRY TO

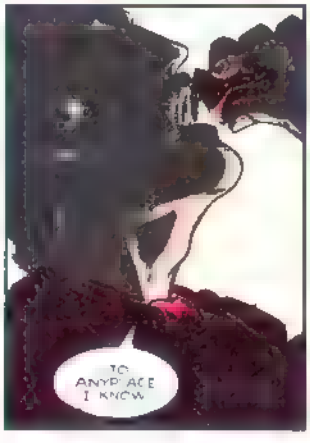

-TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING TO US BACK THEN
ALL DAY I'VE BEEN AFRAID OF HOW I'D REACT DURING THIS DINNER THAT I'D SIT HERE TALKING INANELY--

--AND ALL THE TIME WANT TO REACH UP YOUR DRESS--

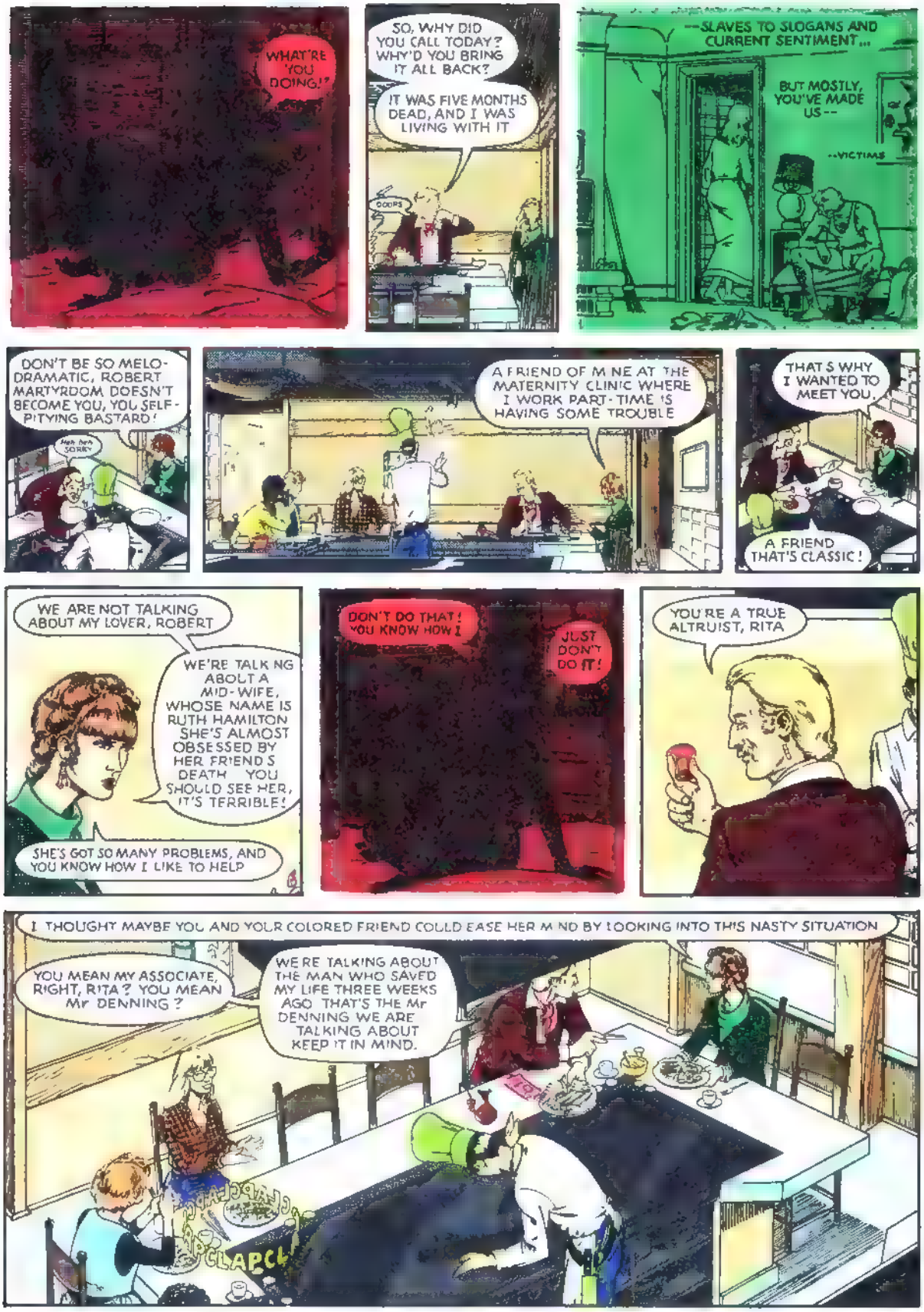

AND SEE IF YOU STILL FEEL THE SAME AND GOD KNOWS I KNOW THE PRICE
YOU THOUGHT I COULD PAY IT, I GUESS. HELL, I MIGHT AS WELL BE FAIR, I GUESS I THOUGHT I COULD PAY THE PRICE ALSO
BUT NOW, STRANGELY ENOUGH, THOUGH I FEARED THE REACTION ALL DAY -
--I DON'T FEEL THE DESIRE AT ALL

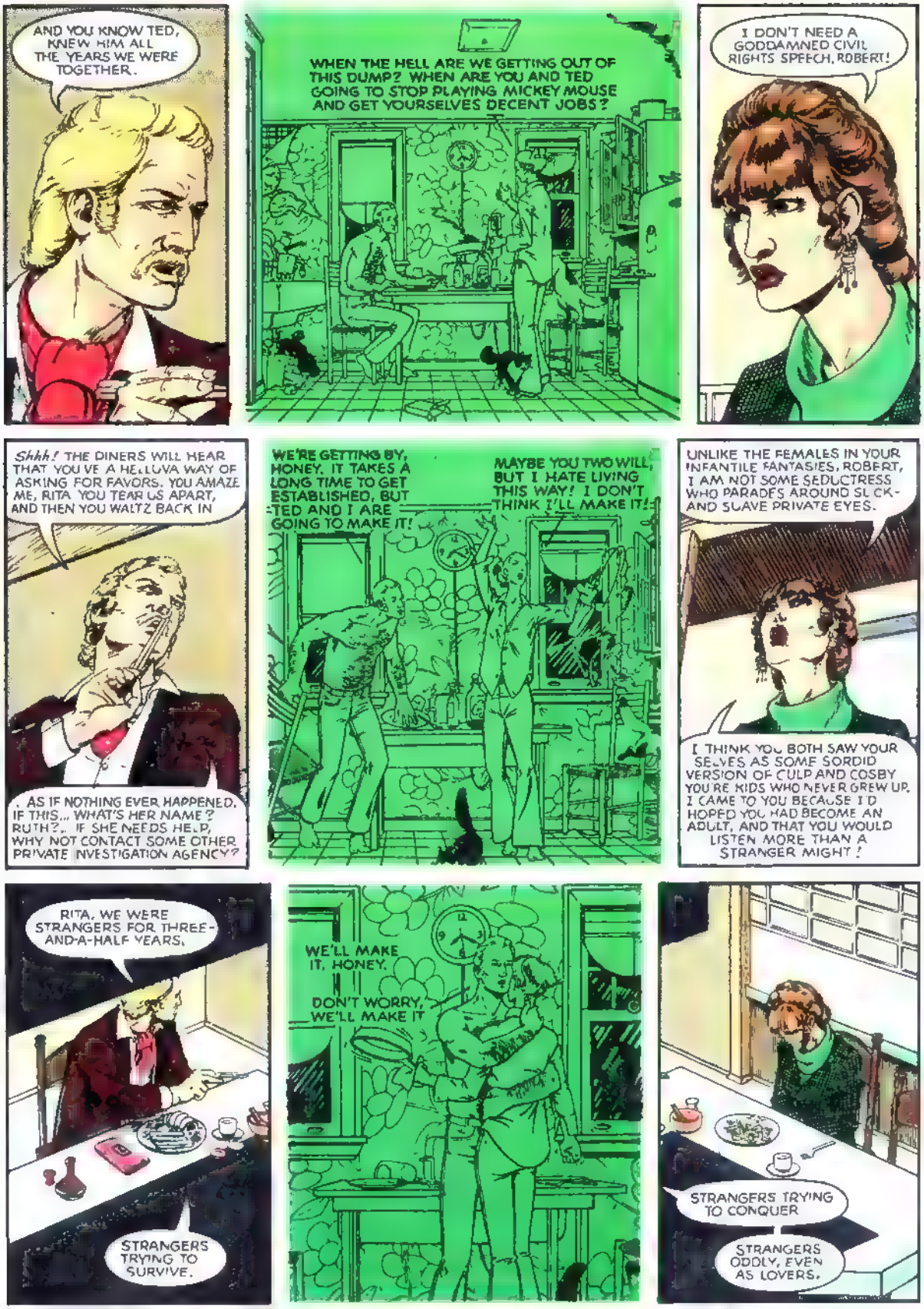
ALL I FEEL.. IS A SENSE OF BEING LOST--
--AND NOT KNOWING HOW TO GET BACK--

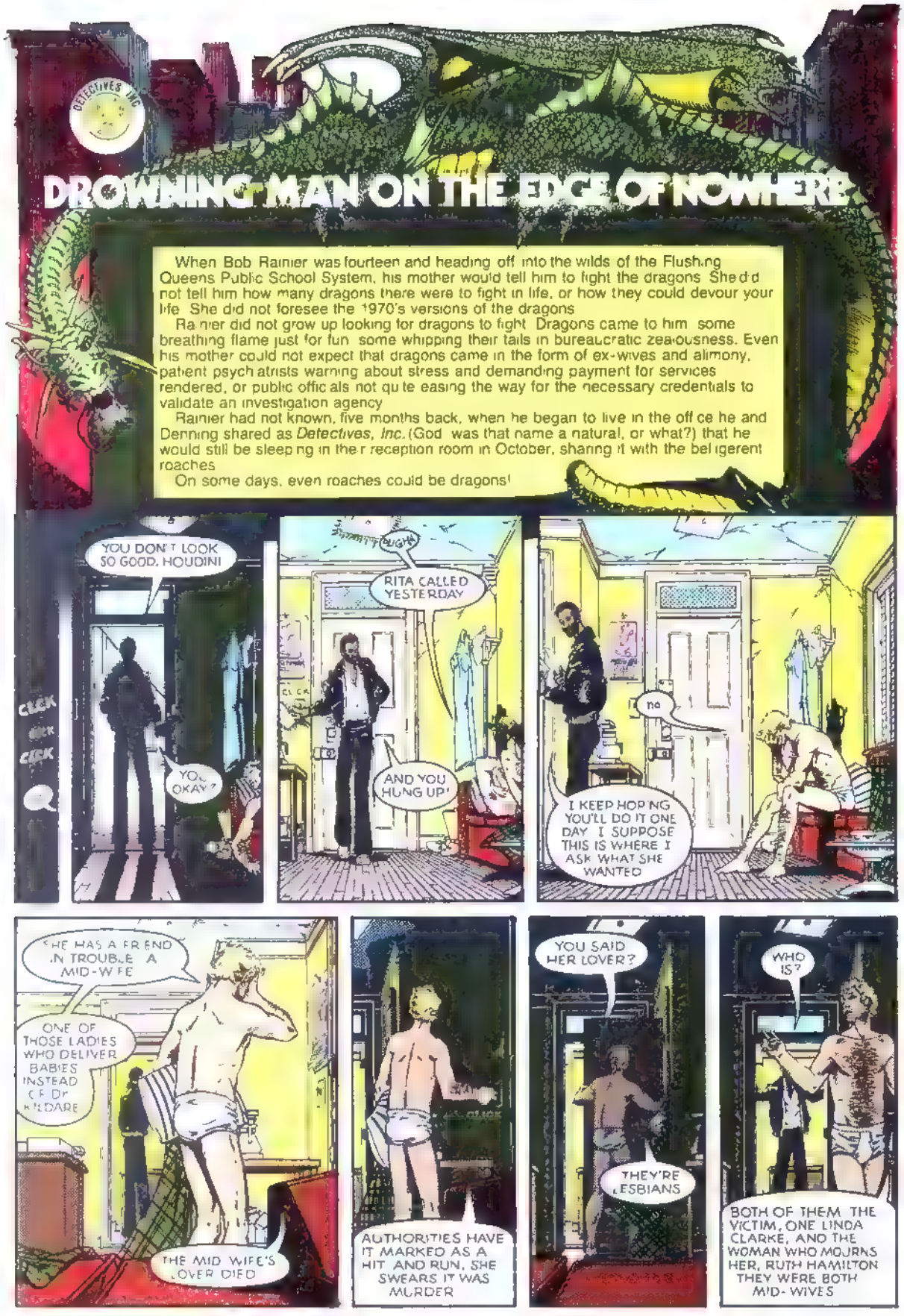

BECAUSE I'M STRANGLING HERE! I'M MORE THAN A GODDAMNED HOUSEWIFE!
WHO CARES ABOUT THIS SHIT? I'VE A RIGHT TO FIND ME!


TO ANYPLACE I KNOW

SEEMS TO ME I'VE READ THOSE LINES BEFORE. YOU'VE GOT ALL THE QUOTES DOWN PAT, RITA--
--AND YOU'VE MADE US ONE-DIMENSIONAL--


WHAT'RE YOU DOING!"
SO, WHY DID YOU CALL TODAY? WHY'D YOU BRING IT ALL BACK?
IT WAS FIVE MONTHS DEAD, AND I WAS LIVING WITH IT
OOOPS
--SLAVES TO SLOGANS AND CURRENT SENTIMENT...
BUT MOSTLY, YOU'VE MADE US--
--VICTIMS
DON'T BE SO MELO-DRAMATIC, ROBERT MARTYRDOM DOESN'T BECOME YOU, YOU SELF-PITYING BASTARD!
heh heh SORRY
A FRIEND OF MINE AT THE MATERNITY CLINIC WHERE I WORK PART-TIME IS HAVING SOME TROUBLE
THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO MEET YOU.
A FRIEND THAT'S CLASSIC!
WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT MY LOVER, ROBERT
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A MID-WIFE, WHOSE NAME IS RUTH HAMILTON SHE'S ALMOST OBSESSED BY HER FRIEND'S DEATH YOU SHOULD SEE HER, IT'S TERRIBLE!
SHE'S GOT SO MANY PROBLEMS, AND YOU KNOW HOW I LIKE TO HELP
DON'T DO THAT! YOU KNOW HOW I
JUST DON'T DO IT!
YOU'RE A TRUE ALTRUIST, RITA
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU AND YOUR COLORED FRIEND COULD EASE HER MIND BY LOOKING INTO THIS NASTY SITUATION
YOU MEAN MY ASSOCIATE, RIGHT, RITA? YOU MEAN Mr DENNING?
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE MAN WHO SAVED MY LIFE THREE WEEKS AGO THAT'S THE Mr DENNING WE ARE TALKING ABOUT KEEP IT IN MIND.
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP


AND YOU KNOW TED, KNEW HIM ALL THE YEARS WE WERE TOGETHER.
WHEN THE HELL ARE WE GETTING OUT OF THIS DUMP? WHEN ARE YOU AND TED GOING TO STOP PLAYING MICKEY MOUSE AND GET YOURSELVES DECENT JOBS?
I DON'T NEED A GODDAMNED CIVIL RIGHTS SPEECH, ROBERT!
Shhh! THE DINERS WILL HEAR THAT YOU'VE A HELLUVA WAY OF ASKING FOR FAVORS. YOU AMAZE ME, RITA. YOU TEAR US APART, AND THEN YOU WALTZ BACK IN
. AS IF NOTHING EVER HAPPENED. IF THIS... WHAT'S HER NAME? RUTH?.. IF SHE NEEDS HELP, WHY NOT CONTACT SOME OTHER PRIVATE INVESTIGATION AGENCY?
WE'RE GETTING BY, HONEY. IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET ESTABLISHED, BUT TED AND I ARE GOING TO MAKE IT!
MAYBE YOU TWO WILL, BUT I HATE LIVING THIS WAY! I DON'T THINK I'LL MAKE IT!
UNLIKE THE FEMALES IN YOUR INFANTILE FANTASIES, ROBERT, I AM NOT SOME SEDUCTRESS WHO PARADES AROUND SLICK- AND SUAVE PRIVATE EYES.
I THINK YOU BOTH SAW YOURSELVES AS SOME SORDID VERSION OF CULP AND COSBY YOU'RE KIDS WHO NEVER GREW UP. I CAME TO YOU BECAUSE I'D HOPED YOU HAD BECOME AN ADULT, AND THAT YOU WOULD LISTEN MORE THAN A STRANGER MIGHT!
RITA, WE WERE STRANGERS FOR THREE-AND-A-HALF YEARS.
STRANGERS TRYING TO SURVIVE.
WE'LL MAKE IT, HONEY.
DON'T WORRY, WE'LL MAKE IT
STRANGERS TRYING TO CONQUER
STRANGERS ODDLY, EVEN AS LOVERS.


DETECTIVES INC.
DROWNING MAN ON THE EDGE OF NOWHERE
When Bob Rainier was fourteen and heading off into the wilds of the Flushing Queens Public School System, his mother would tell him to fight the dragons. She did not tell him how many dragons there were to fight in life, or how they could devour your life. She did not foresee the 1970's versions of the dragons.
Rainier did not grow up looking for dragons to fight. Dragons came to him: some breathing flame just for fun; some whipping their tails in bureaucratic zealousness. Even his mother could not expect that dragons came in the form of ex-wives and alimony, patient psychiatrists warning about stress and demanding payment for services rendered, or public officials not quite easing the way for the necessary credentials to validate an investigation agency.
Rainier had not known, five months back, when he began to live in the office he and Denning shared as *Detectives, Inc.* (God was that name a natural, or what?) that he would still be sleeping in their reception room in October, sharing it with the belligerent roaches.
On some days, even roaches could be dragons!
YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD, HOUDINI
CLICK CLICK CLICK
YOU OKAY?
RITA CALLED YESTERDAY
AND YOU HUNG UP!
no
I KEEP HOPING YOU'LL DO IT ONE DAY. I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHERE I ASK WHAT SHE WANTED
SHE HAS A FRIEND IN TROUBLE. A MID-WIFE
ONE OF THOSE LADIES WHO DELIVER BABIES INSTEAD OF DR. KILDARE
THE MID-WIFE'S LOVER DIED
AUTHORITIES HAVE IT MARKED AS A HIT AND RUN. SHE SWEARS IT WAS MURDER
YOU SAID HER LOVER?
THEY'RE LESBIANS
WHO IS?
BOTH OF THEM. THE VICTIM, ONE LINDA CLARKE, AND THE WOMAN WHO MOURNS HER, RUTH HAMILTON. THEY WERE BOTH MID-WIVES

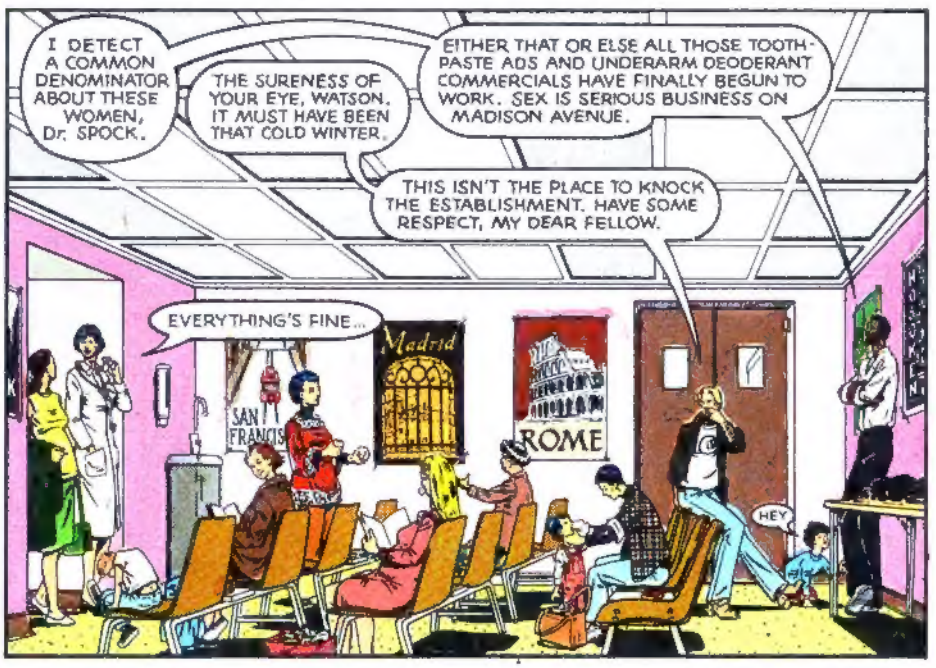
DID RITA HAVE A FIELD DAY WITH THAT
OF COURSE, YOU TOLD RITA TO HANG IT UP, JACK. YOU TOLD HER NO WAY, RIGHT?
YOU TOLD HER YOU'RE A DROWNING MAN ON THE EDGE OF NO WHERE, AND THAT SHE SHOULD STOP SPLASHING THE WATERS.
NO, BUT I LOVE THE WAY YOU PHRASED THAT IT WAS SOPHOMORICALLY COMPELLING
YOU DIDN'T TELL HER WE'D.
OH, MAN YOU DIDN'T?!
I DID
BUT IT'S A CLIENT, THEODORE, THAT'S THE WAY RITA PUT IT
SHE LEFT YOU FOR MENTAL CRUELTY, SO NOW YOU PAY YOUR LAWYER'S FEES AND THE NEW ADDITION TO YOUR PAYROLL... YOUR PSYCHIATRIST
YEAH. IT'S REALLY THE PITS WHEN YOUR SHRINK SENDS A COLLECTION AGENCY AFTER YOU
TELL ME, LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY, AFTER YOU PAY THEM IS THERE ANY LEFT FOR YOU?
Ah, HERE'S TO YOU, MY FRIEND HERE'S TO A LESS COMPLICATED WORLD, WHERE ONE CAN EASILY COMPREHEND ALL THE EVENTS WHICH AFFECT ONE'S LIFE
HERE'S TO SOME OTHER WORLD. HERE'S TO KEEPING SOMETHING IMPORTANT--
-- A SENSE OF, FOR WANT OF BETTER WORDS, DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY IN HOW YOU DEAL WITH OTHER PEOPLE --
--TO KEEPING A HUMANE OUTLOOK IMPORTANT TO THINKING HONOR STILL HAS MEANING AND ISN'T A PSYCHOTIC DELUSION
YOU'RE A REGULAR GERALDO RIVERA
C'MON, CHAMP LET'S GO SEE RUTH HAMILTON AND GET IT OVER WITH.
AND YOU JUST KEEP TREADING WATER, MAN
TREAD LIKE HELL!

As they enter the maternity ward of the hospital, Rainier anticipates their first meeting with Ruth Hamilton, and the fantasies disturb him. She works in a place that has a clientele that is exclusively women, and he wonders if she can put aside her erotic persuasions and maintain the professional stance while touching all those intimate places.

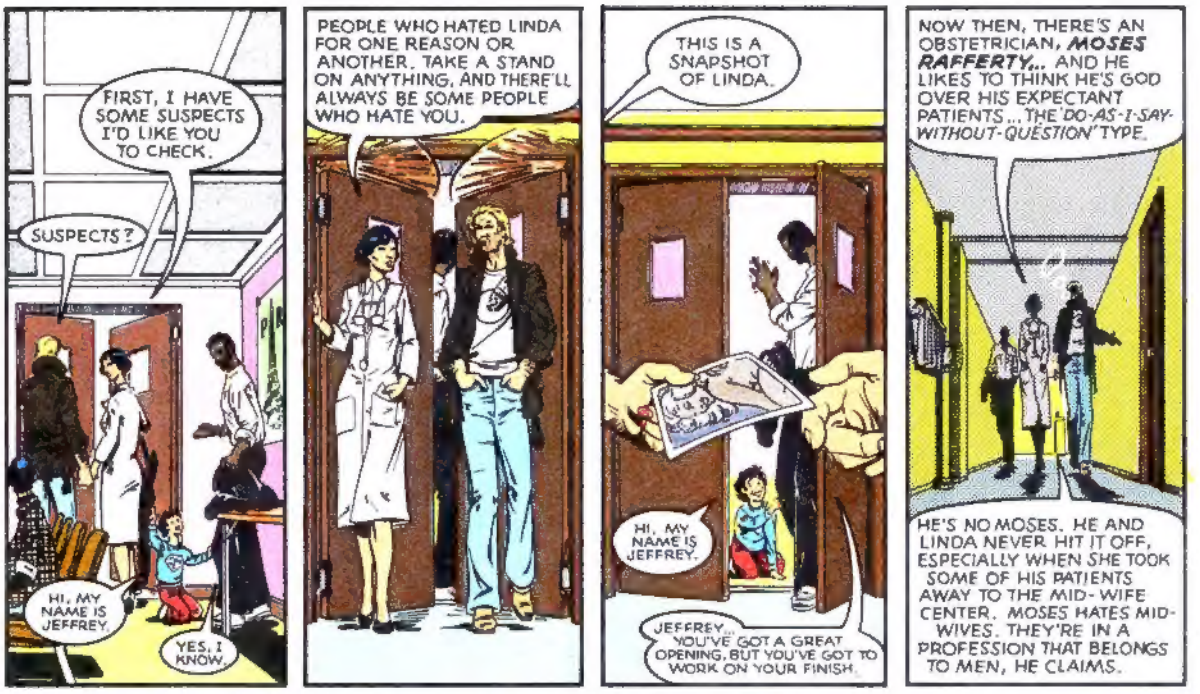
He tries to obliterate the fantasies. He hasn't even met her yet, but already he sees her as Susannah York in *The Killing of Sister George*.

Heterosexual images of lesbians stimulate him, as he despises himself for not being able to maintain his own professional cool. Breasts flattened against breasts. Lipsticked lips on erect nipples. And then, unwanted, come the brief mini-portraits of bull-dykes, fiercely caricatured (they'll beat the shit out of you, son), and that is replaced by Dustin Hoffman's *Lenny Bruce* introducing Valerie Perrine's *Honey Bruce* to carressing another woman, and then he is lost in the outraged politics and semantics of the fanatical fringe of sisterhood.

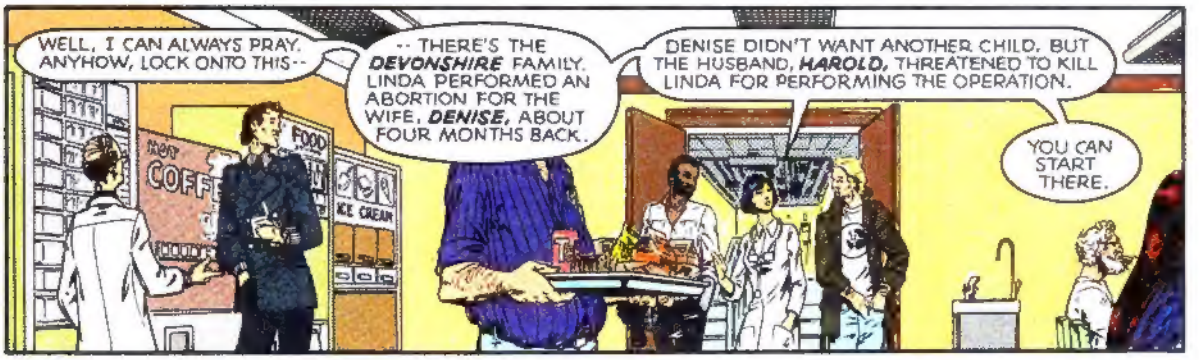
And not once, in all the images, does he see human beings.

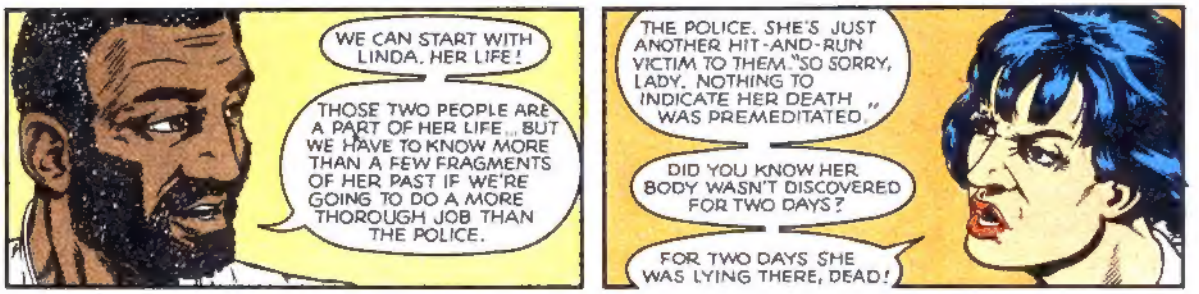

I DETECT A COMMON DENOMINATOR ABOUT THESE WOMEN, Dr. SPOCK.
THE SURENESS OF YOUR EYE, WATSON. IT MUST HAVE BEEN THAT COLD WINTER.
EITHER THAT OR ELSE ALL THOSE TOOTH-PASTE ADS AND UNDERARM DEODERANT COMMERCIALS HAVE FINALLY BEGUN TO WORK. SEX IS SERIOUS BUSINESS ON MADISON AVENUE.
THIS ISN'T THE PLACE TO KNOCK THE ESTABLISHMENT. HAVE SOME RESPECT, MY DEAR FELLOW.
EVERYTHING'S FINE...
SAN FRANCIS
Madrid
ROME
HEY

MOST OF THE STAFF HERE ARE AWARE THAT I'M HIRING INVESTIGATORS, AND A FEW KNOW SOME DETAILS ABOUT MY PRIVATE LIFE--
--BUT I HAVEN'T COME COMPLETELY OUT OF THE CLOSET YET, SO PERHAPS WE CAN DISCUSS THIS IN THE HOSPITAL CAFETERIA. NO ONE'LL HEAR US IN THAT CONFUSION.

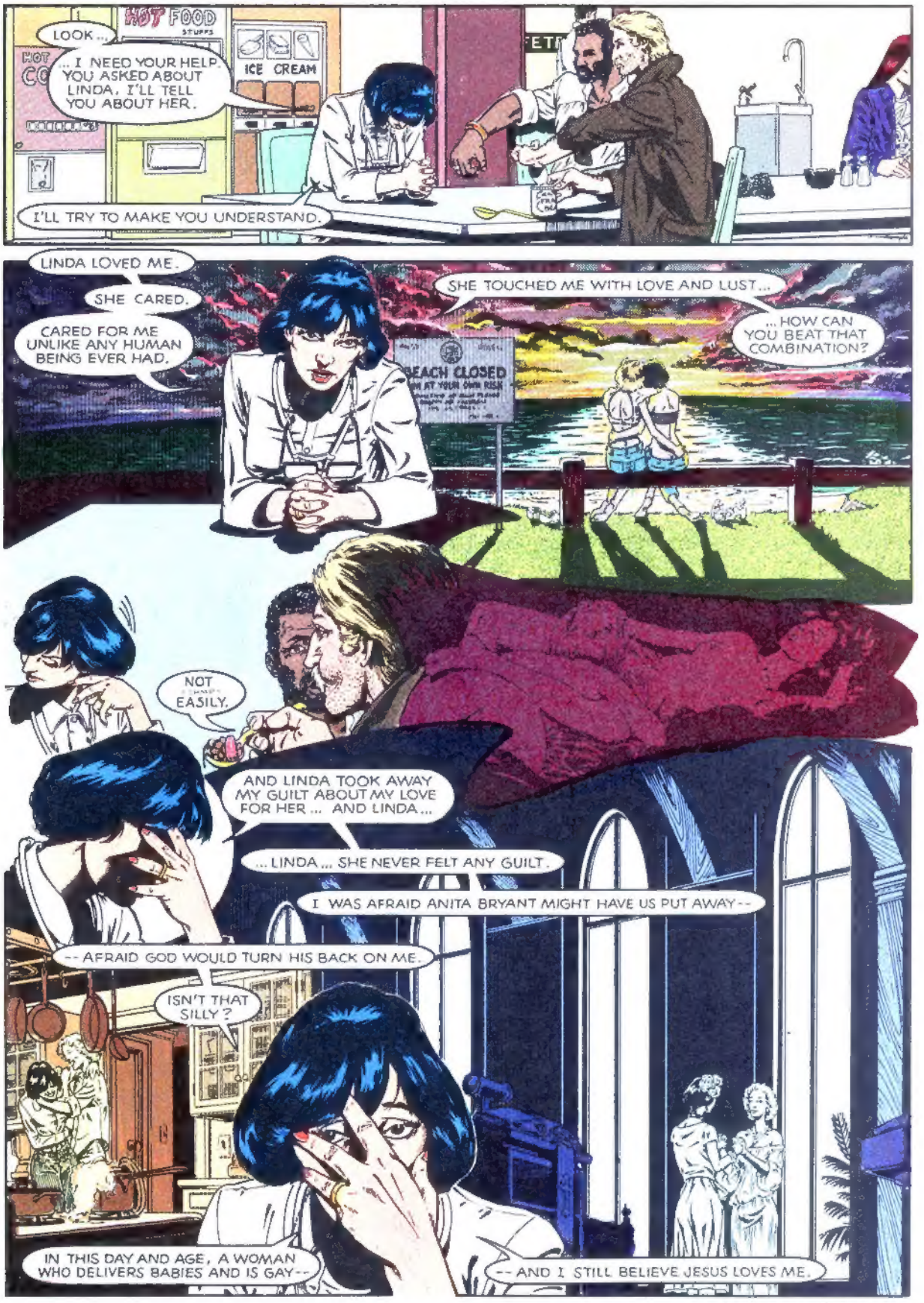

FIRST, I HAVE SOME SUSPECTS I'D LIKE YOU TO CHECK.
SUSPECTS?
HI, MY NAME IS JEFFREY.
YES, I KNOW.
PEOPLE WHO HATED LINDA FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, TAKE A STAND ON ANYTHING, AND THERE'LL ALWAYS BE SOME PEOPLE WHO HATE YOU.
THIS IS A SNAPSHOT OF LINDA.
HI, MY NAME IS JEFFREY.
JEFFREY... YOU'VE GOT A GREAT OPENING, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO WORK ON YOUR FINISH.
NOW THEN, THERE'S AN OBSTETRICIAN, MOSES RAFFERTY... AND HE LIKES TO THINK HE'S GOD OVER HIS EXPECTANT PATIENTS... THE 'DO-AS-I-SAY-WITHOUT-QUESTION' TYPE.
HE'S NO MOSES. HE AND LINDA NEVER HIT IT OFF, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE TOOK SOME OF HIS PATIENTS AWAY TO THE MID-WIFE CENTER. MOSES HATES MID-WIVES. THEY'RE IN A PROFESSION THAT BELONGS TO MEN, HE CLAIMS.

SOUNDS A BIT PARANOID TO ME. ANY OTHER MID-WIVES CASH IT IN SUSPICIOUSLY?
YOU DISAPPROVE OF ME?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M HERE FOR.
YOU'RE RIGHT, REMEMBER THAT!
SURE YOU CAN KEEP TRACK OF THIS, Mr. RAINIER?
I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST SHOT.


WELL, I CAN ALWAYS PRAY, ANYHOW, LOCK ONTO THIS--
-- THERE'S THE DEVONSHIRE FAMILY. LINDA PERFORMED AN ABORTION FOR THE WIFE, DENISE, ABOUT FOUR MONTHS BACK.
DENISE DIDN'T WANT ANOTHER CHILD. BUT THE HUSBAND, HAROLD, THREATENED TO KILL LINDA FOR PERFORMING THE OPERATION.
YOU CAN START THERE.
HOT COFFEE
FOOD
ICE CREAM


WE CAN START WITH LINDA. HER LIFE!
THOSE TWO PEOPLE ARE A PART OF HER LIFE... BUT WE HAVE TO KNOW MORE THAN A FEW FRAGMENTS OF HER PAST IF WE'RE GOING TO DO A MORE THOROUGH JOB THAN THE POLICE.
THE POLICE. SHE'S JUST ANOTHER HIT-AND-RUN VICTIM TO THEM. "SO SORRY, LADY. NOTHING TO INDICATE HER DEATH WAS PREMEDITATED."
DID YOU KNOW HER BODY WASN'T DISCOVERED FOR TWO DAYS?
FOR TWO DAYS SHE WAS LYING THERE, DEAD!

THESE THE TWO HOT-SHOT PRIVATE EYES YOU'VE BROUGHT IN, RUTH?
Dr. LLOYD KENNEDY--
Dr. CURTIS BLAKESLEY--
THIS IS Mr. DENNING AND Mr. RAINIER --
AND YES THEY ARE.
YOU'RE CARRYING THIS TOO FAR, RUTH. WHAT DO YOU THINK, LLOYD?
DEFINITELY, RUTH. LINDA'S DEATH HAS BECOME AN OBSESSION WITH YOU. QUITE UNHEALTHY.
HOT FOOD
LINDA'S DEATH WAS UNHEALTHY, DON'T YOU THINK?
TOUCHÉ, LLOYD. ONE FOR HER.
LISTEN, RUTH, WE'RE ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR HEALTH.
CURTIS, YOU'VE NEVER CARED ABOUT MY HEALTH.
AS A DOCTOR, I CARE FOR ALL HUMAN LIFE.
WORDS LIKE THAT COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH MAKE ME RETCH.
NOW, SEE, RUTH, CURTIS IS RIGHT. LOOK AT THE WAY YOU REACT. YOU MUST SEE THAT IT IS UNSTABLE. YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT...
ACCEPT SHIT!
LEAVE US ALONE, LLOYD.
WELLLL...
AND YOU TOO, CURTIS.
YOU KNOW HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE.
WHY DON'T YOU MAKE THE OBVIOUS COMMENT ABOUT ME AND MEN?
I FIGURE IF I GIVE YOU TWO SECONDS, YOU'LL DO IT FOR ME.
SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE...
--MEN. I'M SURE.


LOOK...
...I NEED YOUR HELP. YOU ASKED ABOUT LINDA. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT HER.
HOT FOOD
ICE CREAM
I'LL TRY TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND.
LINDA LOVED ME.
SHE CARED.
CARED FOR ME UNLIKE ANY HUMAN BEING EVER HAD.
SHE TOUCHED ME WITH LOVE AND LUST...
...HOW CAN YOU BEAT THAT COMBINATION?
BEACH CLOSED
NOT EASILY.
AND LINDA TOOK AWAY MY GUILT ABOUT MY LOVE FOR HER ... AND LINDA...
...LINDA ... SHE NEVER FELT ANY GUILT.
I WAS AFRAID ANITA BRYANT MIGHT HAVE US PUT AWAY--
--AFRAID GOD WOULD TURN HIS BACK ON ME.
ISN'T THAT SILLY?
IN THIS DAY AND AGE, A WOMAN WHO DELIVERS BABIES AND IS GAY--
--AND I STILL BELIEVE JESUS LOVES ME.

To be continued . . .